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11-21-1969

# Congressional Record - Agnew and News Media

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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## Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Congressional Record - Agnew and News Media" (1969). *Mike Mansfield Speeches*. 808.  
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#### VICE PRESIDENT AGNEW AND THE NEWS MEDIA

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, the distinguished Vice President of the United States, SPIRO AGNEW, delivered a speech in Des Moines, Iowa, a week ago, and in Montgomery, Ala., last evening.

On the first occasion, he lashed out against an individual, Mr. Averell Harriman, and a portion of the fourth estate; namely, the TV segment.

Last evening it was the turn of the press, with specific newspapers designated, a news magazine designated, and a radio and TV station designated.

The Vice President has the right to express his views just as we have the right to express our views in and out of this body.

I do not feel as keenly as the Vice President does about the various elements which comprise the fourth estate because I believe that they, as much as he, have a right to express their opinion on the editorial page and the right to report the news in the news section of the publications concerned.

I would hope that none of us would become so concerned that we felt we could not stand the heat once we reached the kitchen.

In politics, we have to anticipate a certain amount of heat. We have to expect a certain amount of criticism. It is my belief that there are newspapers and magazines, TV and radio programs, which could be found on the opposite side of those already mentioned.

Mr. President, newspapers, news magazines, radio and television stations have, on the whole, I believe, done a very competent and fair job in informing the American people of the issues of the day.

Insofar as the editorial pages are concerned, it is my understanding that that is where editors and others of like caliber are supposed to set forth their own personal opinions, and that is so recognized.

I like to recall, also, that there is in the Bill of Rights the first amendment to the Constitution, to the effect that not only shall there be freedom of religion and freedom to assemble peaceably, but also that there shall be free speech and a free press.

I can say that in all my years of public office I have never been quoted incorrectly. I have been misinterpreted, according to my lights, at times; and I think perhaps the reason for that is I did not speak or write as plainly as I should have.

But I do want to say that I hope we do not make a mountain out of this molehill which seems to be developing, and that we recognize that the Vice President has the right to make the statements he does, I hope we recognize as well that the press, the TV, the radio, and the

magazines do operate under the protection of the first amendment, as does every individual Senator and every individual citizen, and, of course, I would include the Vice President within the confines of the first amendment as well.

Thus, rather than create a situation which would tend to divide us more, I wish that the voices would be lowered, that we would seek to bring all our people together, and that we would face up to our common problems not on the basis of political feelings, not on the basis of personal dislike for what has been done, but on the basis of understanding that a democracy is a risky business which could well be one of its strengths. Indeed, a democracy comprises all kinds of opinions and if we are going to survive with the type of institutions with which we have been accustomed, we should recognize that the times are here to bring us all together, and to remember that above our personal feelings, or feelings of any party, it is the welfare and the security of the Republic which must at all times come first and foremost.

Accordingly, I would conclude, Mr. President, by expressing the hope again that we would all follow the advice of the President in his inaugural address, to lower our voices, get together, and try to work for the common good of this great Republic. The first amendment to the Constitution must not be suspended, the rights under it must not be diminished or those exercising these rights must not be intimidated. As I said, democracy is a risky business—and the first amendment illustrates that risk as well as its truest meaning and strength.